

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-21 and 23-40 are presented for consideration, with Claims 1 and 21 being independent.

The independent claims have been amended to further distinguish Applicants' invention from the cited art.

Claims 1, 3-5, 8-13, 16, 21, 23-25 and 28-33 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being obvious over Ludwig '294. Claims 6, 7, 18-20, 26, 27 and 38-40 stand rejected as allegedly being obvious over Ludwig in view of Brunson '823. Lastly, Claims 14, 15, 17, 34, 35 and 37 stand rejected as allegedly being obvious over Ludwig in view of Palmer '683. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 of Applicants' invention relates to a distributed office system provided with terminal devices installed for a plurality of users, and a server device connected to the terminal devices via a communication channel, for displaying information on a screen of a terminal device of each of the users. This system includes working situation display means for collectively displaying an information aggregate including at least two types of information received from each user, including the user's working situation image, and character information concerning the user's working situation on the screen of the terminal device of the user, and virtual room display means for displaying, for each user, diagram images indicating the user's virtual single-room office on the screen of the terminal device of the user. Character information is updated on the basis of each user's operation. As amended, Claim 1 sets forth that in case a first user leaves his/her desk, on a screen of the terminal devices of the other users, the first user's working situation is replaced with a blind image of the first user with character information.

Claim 21 relates to a method of managing a distributed office system provided with terminal devices installed for a plurality of users, and a server device connected to the terminal devices via a communication channel for displaying information on a screen of the terminal device of the user in the distributed office system. The method includes the steps of displaying diagram images for each user indicating a user's virtual single-room office on the screen of the terminal device of the user, collectively displaying an information aggregate of at least two types of information received from each other, including a user's working situation image, and character information concerning the user's working situation image, and updating character information on the basis of each user's operation. Like Claim 1, Claim 21 sets forth that in case a first user leaves his/her desk, on the screen of the terminal devices of the other users, the first user's working situation is replaced with a blind image of the first user with character information.

Support for the claim amendments can be found, for example, in Figure 15 and on page 15, line 10, et seq. of the specification. In accordance with Applicants' claimed invention, a distributed office system can display pertinent information about each user, including updated character information and, when one user leaves his/her desk, provide the terminal devices of the other user with a blind image of the first user with character information.

As discussed in the previous Amendment of October 7, 2002, the Ludwig patent relates to a multimedia collaboration system that displays an information aggregate of another user's working situation. The computer based system in Ludwig uses geographically dispersed multimedia LANs that are connected by a WAN. As shown in Figures 2A and 2B, information is provided regarding another user's work station and users in different windows are displayed.

In contrast to Applicants' claimed invention, however, Ludwig is not understood to teach or suggest, inter alia, in case that a first user leaves his/her desk, replacing on the screen of the terminal devices of the other users, the first user's working situation with a blind image of the first user with character information. While Ludwig may be read to provide user's information, it is respectfully submitted that Ludwig does not update this information or replace a user's working situation with a blind image with character information when the user leaves his/her desk.

The Office Action asserts, on page 3, that character data is updated on the basis of each user's operation. It is respectfully submitted, however, that the portions of Ludwig cited in the Office Action for support of this "updating" feature (column 15, lines 10-31; column 26, lines 15-35; and column 27, lines 5-41) are read to merely disclose the ability of a participant to telepoint or annotate the snapshots that are shared.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 1, 3-5, 8-13, 16, 21, 23-25 and 28-33 under 35 U.S.C. §103 is respectfully requested.

The secondary citation to Brunson relates to a video messaging system and was cited for its teaching of a universal mailbox to store messages. It is respectfully submitted, however, that Brunson fails to compensate for the deficiencies in Ludwig as discussed above with respect to independent Claims 1 and 21. Accordingly, it is submitted that the proposed combination of Ludwig and Brunson, even if proper, still fails to teach or suggest Applicants' claimed invention. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 6, 7, 18-20, 26, 27 and 38-40 under 35 U.S.C. §103 is respectfully requested.

Finally, the secondary citation to Palmer relates to a video teleconferencing method and apparatus and was cited for its teaching of frame rate control. It is respectfully

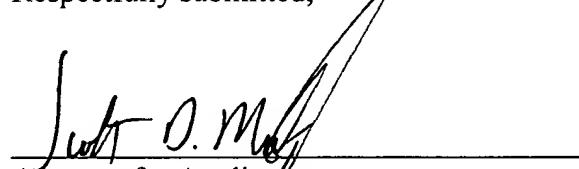
submitted, however, that Palmer fails to compensate for the deficiencies in Ludwig as discussed above with respect to independent Claims 1 and 21. Therefore, the proposed combination of Ludwig and Palmer, even if proper, still fails to teach or suggest Applicants' claimed invention. Thus, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 14, 15, 17, 34, 35 and 37 under 35 U.S.C. §103 is respectfully requested.

Accordingly, it is submitted that Applicants' invention as set forth in independent Claims 1 and 21 is patentable over the cited art. In addition, dependent Claims 3-20 and 23-40 set forth additional features of Applicants' invention. Independent consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of this application is deemed to be in order and such action is respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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